

Don HANDELMAN, *Models and Mirrors: Towards an Anthropology of Public Events* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, 330 p., ISBN 0-521-35069-7)

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of this journal will go a long way towards providing a more open forum for these discussions. More importantly, its existence will undoubtedly facilitate the growth of the discipline by allowing scholars and students a means by which to share, debate, and discuss their perspectives on the genre. As a vehicle of expression for those involved in the scholarly pursuit of this sometimes elusive genre, its arrival is undoubtedly well timed!

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Don HANDELMAN, *Models and Mirrors: Towards an Anthropology of Public Events* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, 330 p., ISBN 0-521-35069-7).

This is a collection of Handelman's own essays from the past twenty or so years. It is woven together with new material to make a loosely knit, relatively coherent treatment of public events, a category broader than, but inclusive of, what others have called ritual, cultural performance, symbolic interaction, or ceremony. Among the major events considered are the Palio of Siena, Italy; Christmas mumming in Newfoundland, Canada; holiday celebrations in Israeli kindergartens; state ceremonies in Israel; and clowning among Pueblos and Hopis, as well as Pakistani weddings. He also includes two chapters on what Erving Goffman would have called "interaction rituals" in the workplace; Handelman calls them "proto-events". His aim is to understand the logic of design or composition implicit in public events. Thus, he hopes to grant to such events an epistemological primacy that refuses the easy reductionisms of functionalist alternatives. Public events, he implies, are worth thinking about, perhaps even worth thinking *with*.

Three of the chapters are based on his own fieldwork; four are reanalyses of ethnographies by others. Most of the chapters attempt to balance ethnographic account with theoretical reflection. In a three-chapter, theoretical introduction Handelman formulates a threefold typology: (1) events that model the lived-in world; (2) events that present the lived-in world; (3) events that re-present the lived-in world. With the exception of the chapter on state ceremonies in Israel, however, most of the chapters are not substantial elaborations on the typology, though they sometimes allude to it.

Though the book does not propose to offer a single thesis, it braids together some persistent themes: paradox, clowning, transformation, play, inversion, liminality, anti-structure (along with its opposite, structure), and process (along with its opposite, system). Handelman treats these in the tradition of symbolic anthropology; the influence of Victor Turner and Bruce Kapferer, for example, is noteworthy. Handelman's approach, though not structuralist or phenomenological in any formal sense, has the structuralists' preoccupation with dialectical polarities and the mediation of oppositions, as well the phenomenologists' concern to avoid reductionism.

Handelman's strength is the same thing as his weakness, namely, his capacity for transforming public events into "snares for thought". He makes rites think well. His interpretations are meditations, ruminations that meander as they ascend. They are not easy to read, because their path is winding, sometimes torturous, but they usually arrive someplace interesting. If one loves the journey, as I do, Handelman seems a worthy guide through the depths and heights of public events. We see in them what neither the performers nor we suspected was there; it is all very magical. However, after the carnivalesque journey one may be left with the vague premonition that Handelman has tricked us — maybe even himself — into believing that the snare for thought resides in the public event rather than in the scholarly mind that loves tinkering and toying with performances.

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Anne K. KALER, *The Picara: From Hera to Fantasy Heroine*
(Bowling Green, Ohio, Bowling Green State University
Popular Press, 1991, 210 p.+index, ISBN 0-87972-515-X,
hardcover, 0-87972-516-8 paperback).

The picara in literature, according to Anne Kaler's introduction, is a female character typified most clearly by her autonomy. Launched on "the masculine outward quest of the hero" by abandonment, she is most often a childless wanderer who lives by her wits and her sexuality on the fringes of respectable society. The purpose of Kaler's book is to trace the literary origins of the picara and then to identify and discuss her most prominent characteristics. As the title of the book makes plain, the literature that Kaler examines ranges over a vast expanse of time and territory.